

WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon today announced that Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes will receive \$26,773,384.83 in federal disaster aid grants from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The grants will reimburse the Parishes for structural and rebuilding costs following Hurricane Katrina. May 14, 2007

Contact: Robin Winchell (202) 225-4031

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"Rebuilding our schools and sheriff's facilities are crucial steps in the rebirth of our communities in St. Bernard and Plaquemines," said Rep. Melancon. **"As we replace our damaged infrastructure, more families will be encouraged to return home. We have come a long way already in south Louisiana, but there is still much to do and I will continue fighting in Congress for the funding we need to fully recover and protect ourselves from coming storms."**

The following federal grants were announced today:

- **1,484,781.30 to replace the severely damaged Port Sulphur High School Science Building (Plaquemines Parish).** High winds and an 11-foot storm surge from Hurricane Katrina damaged the campus of Port Sulphur High School. This grant will fund most of the cost of replacing the school's 6,042 square-foot science building, which houses a science classroom laboratory and the Head Start Program. Damage assessments determined that the structural integrity had been compromised by the storm. Also damaged were ridge vents, windows, ceiling, flooring, walls, lockers, laboratory equipment, and electrical and mechanical systems. The facility was built in 1996.

- **1,863,982.67 to replace the Port Sulphur High School's severely damaged Junior High School Building (Plaquemines Parish).** Hurricane Katrina caused extensive damage to the Junior High School Building on the campus of Port Sulphur High School. This grant will fund most of the cost of replacing the facility, which contains six classrooms, a band room, and an athletic locker room. The facility, which was constructed in the 1980s, is a two-story, 14,892-square-foot concrete masonry unit structure with a metal-deck roof. Damaged within the building were the roof, ceiling, flooring, walls, doors, windows, classroom fixtures, shelving, cabinetry, and lockers, as well as the fire alarm, electrical and mechanical systems.

- **1,614,277.67 to replace the severely damaged Buras Middle School main building and cafeteria (Plaquemines Parish)**. This grant will fund most of the cost of replacing the Buras Middle School main building and cafeteria, which are adjoined by a canopy. Both the 30,450-square-foot main building and 4,312 SF cafeteria of Buras Middle School suffered severe structural damage from Hurricane Katrina. Up to 12 feet of floodwaters inundated the campus, compromising the structural integrity of both single-story buildings. Also damaged were the brick veneer, gutters, roof, ceilings, flooring, windows, walls, doors, classroom fixtures, counters, shelving, cabinetry, lockers, bathroom fixtures, commercial food preparation equipment, refrigeration room, water heaters and all plumbing, electrical, and mechanical systems. Both facilities are of concrete masonry construction, and were built in 1950.

- **\$1,211,859.00 for Debris Removal (Plaquemines Parish).** On Aug. 29, 2005, strong winds, storm surge and heavy rains from Hurricane Katrina toppled trees and damaged property throughout Plaquemines Parish. The widespread destruction posed a threat to public health and safety. 100 of the damaged residential and commercial structures were designated by the parish as potentially containing asbestos, resulting in 40,000 cubic yards (CY) of potentially hazardous demolition debris. In addition, 400 CY of poles treated with creosote were identified for removal, and 40 air conditioning units required special handling due to the presence of Freon. This federal grant will fund the specialized demolition, removal and disposal of these potentially hazardous structures and structural elements.

- **\$2,829,846.60 to replace the severely damaged Sheriff Annex (St. Bernard Parish).** On Aug. 29, 2005, high winds, driven rain, and flooding from Hurricane Katrina damaged the Sheriff Annex in St. Bernard Parish, which housed the parish sheriff's offices. In addition to the wind and rain damage, six feet of floodwater inundated the facility. This grant will fund most of the cost of replacing the two-story, 11,500-square-foot structure, which was built in 1965. Damaged were the ceilings, walls, flooring, doors, windows, cabinetry, counters, lavatory and kitchen fixtures, water cooler, fire alarm system, telephony, public address system, elevators, and all electrical, mechanical, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

- **\$17,768,637.59 (previously \$5,305,500.00) for temporary pump-out and hauling of sewage (St. Bernard Parish).** High winds from Hurricane Katrina caused a storm surge in the Intercoastal Waterway, breaching the levee and flooding St. Bernard Parish to depths of four to 25 feet. The entire sewage collection system was fully submerged. The system consists of a network of 92 lift stations, 90 of which were damaged and out of operation. To safeguard public health and safety, parish officials arranged for the temporary pump-out and hauling of raw sewage from inoperable lift stations. Initial versions of this project worksheet funded estimated costs for the removal and hauling of sewage during the anticipated period for repair, July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007, and provided only \$5,305,500.00. This version (three) increases the funding for this period to a total of \$17,768,637.59, based on a review of actual contractor invoices. Projected costs were calculated based on actual costs and were validated and adjusted for reasonability .

Rep. Melancon added, **"While I am grateful we are receiving grants such as these to help us rebuild, I won't stop fighting in Congress until the current local cost-share policy is changed and the federal government covers 100% of these important public assistance projects. It is unrealistic and unfair to expect parish governments, who have had their tax bases devastated by the storms, to come up with the 10% local match required for these projects. This local match has been waived by different Presidents dozens of times in the past, and for far less costly disasters. Louisiana deserves to be treated no differently and I will keep pushing until this match gets waived completely, either by act of Congress or by order of the President."**

Rep. Melancon has worked in Congress to further reduce the financial burden on local governments in south Louisiana struggling to recover after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Under the federal Robert T. Stafford Act, public assistance projects like those announced today require a 10 percent cost share from local governments upfront before the remaining 90 percent in federal grant money can be used. Many of the estimated 23,000 disaster recovery projects in Louisiana have been put on hold because local governments don't have the resources to provide the match.

Rep. Melancon worked with House leadership to include language waiving this local match requirement in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, the latest version of which was passed by the House last week. Waiving the local 10% match requirement would free up an estimated \$800 million for Louisiana to invest in critical needs, like repairing and rebuilding police stations, fire stations and other important infrastructure. The local match requirement has been waived 32 times since 1985 when per capita rebuilding costs have been deemed excessive.

Rep. Melancon also made sure language was included in the *Gulf Coast Hurricane Housing Recovery Act of 2007* ,

passed by the House on March 21

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, to cut the red tape that was preventing the state of Louisiana from using already appropriated federal funding to help local governments pay their local match for rebuilding projects.

In addition, Rep. Melancon successfully lobbied House leadership to include language in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill making Katrina- and Rita-affected communities eligible for Community Disaster Loan forgiveness. An estimated \$1 billion in CDLs were provided by the federal government to hurricane-affected local governments immediately following Katrina and Rita to help them continue daily operations, such as payroll for law enforcement and emergency responders. Many local governments do not have the ability to repay this massive debt, as their tax bases were devastated by the storms. Rep. Melancon has argued that, in the past, CDLs have been forgiven following many other major disasters, including Hurricane Andrew and the September 11th terrorist attacks.

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